

LEFT CAUCUS NEWSLETTER

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Canadian Auto Workers Report points left Discussion needed!

By Gord Doctorow and Lois Bédard, Co-chairs, Ontario Left Caucus

For the first time since the NDP was elected to power in September 1990 in Ontario, the possibility exists for significant forces to mobilize in defence of the Party's program and against the corporate assault which has thrown it off balance. In his Report to the

change of direction for the ONDP. We reprint below the covering letter in full, as well as the portion of his Report which deals with the NDP.

The background for this statement is easy to ascertain. Auto workers have suffered tremendously from the erosion of Ontario's industrial base, accelerated by the Free

Trade Act. In St. Catharines, a work force of 8,000 will be reduced to half its size by 1994. The collapse of Air Canada through privatization and deregulation has pitted their former workers against their fellow workers in Canadian Airlines. Such acts of privatization and deregulation were an essential part of the terms of the NAFTA, which were left untouched by the proposals contained in the Charlottetown Accord so enthusiastically supported by the Rae leadership. Rollbacks, cutbacks and layoffs have devastated employees' lives as Mulroney pursues a corporate agenda which has drained hundreds of thousands of industrial jobs to the United States.

Hargrove's critique of the ONDP for failing to mobilize its membership and the labour movement behind an industrial strategy to help put Canadian workers' interests above those of the corporations represents the clearest and most incisive assessment made by a labour or NDP leader of the consequences. **Discussion - page 6**



Buzz Hargrove, Auto Workers President, calls for debate on the direction of ONDP. National Council of the Canadian Auto Workers on December 11-13, 1992, which was endorsed by several hundred delegates following a full discussion, CAW President Buzz Hargrove provided an analysis of the crisis in the ONDP which amounted to a call for action to keep the Party on course. Already an NDP riding has called on the NDP Provincial Council to invite Hargrove to address the Council meeting in Toronto on March 27th and 28th on his perspective.

It is critical that members of the Party openly greet this discussion as a healthy and necessary step to revitalize the ONDP. In his covering letter sent with his National Council Report to the ONDP Caucus, Hargrove motivates the need for a

*** EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW ***

Drainville speaks out on casino gambling

We reprint below an interview by Jeff Smith of the *Left Caucus Newsletter* with Victoria-Haliburton New Democrat MPP Dennis Drainville. Drainville has been the most outspoken critic of the government's plans to legalize casino gambling in Ontario. He has bravely bucked pressures from the leadership circles to silence his views. A recent effort to silence Drainville has been rebuffed. Still, Bob Rae has threatened discipline up to expulsion from the caucus for dissidents like Drainville, who has publicly announced his intention to oppose casino legislation when it is presented for adoption shortly after the Legislature returns to session this April. The Left Caucus feels Drainville should be congratulated for his moral courage instead of being denigrated for his principled position. The Party membership should defend the right to dissent of all NDP MPPs on issues where the Party has either no position at all or has a position which is in opposition to proposed government legislation. Otherwise the principles of accountability and party democracy would be severely threatened. You can show your support for Dennis Drainville by writing your letters of protest to:

Premier Bob Rae, Ontario Legislature, Queen's Park, Toronto, M7A 2R9, with copies to Drainville at the same address, c/o NDP Caucus.

JS: Why are you opposed to the province opening casinos?

DD: I believe that casino gambling, like most forms of gambling, is just another tax on the poor. I think that we have a great deal of tradition in our party as regards the use of monies that come through lotteries, that has always said that people should not be receiving something for nothing, and that the fruits of their labour will be things that will be up-building and sup-

portive of the whole community. J.S. Woodsworth, Stanley Knowles, M.J. Coldwell and Tommy Douglas and David Lewis—all of them have commented on being against the use of lottery funds and I believe that tradition is something we need to maintain even though we are now the Government of Ontario. I think that the move of the NDP to expand lotteries and to establish casino gambling, in a sense, is not what we should be doing as a government for **Casinos - page 2**

Casinos -- A tax on the poor

from page 1
these following reasons:

1) We were not given a mandate by the people of Ontario to expand lotteries; in fact, we never spoke about the issue. It was not raised during the election campaign and therefore we have no mandate to do that.

2) It is against our tradition as a Party and therefore we should not do it.

3) It is also a divergence from the policy of Provincial governments in the past.

So, for these three reasons, I think that we should not pursue establishing casino gambling in the Province of Ontario.

JS: Do you feel that gambling would have any benefits at all?

DD: Well no, I don't. Quite frankly, one has to weigh what the benefits of any project are; for instance, yes, there will be some money that will come into the coffers of the Province of Ontario. But will that amount of money defray the cost of the increased benefits that will have to be paid out to people who have lost their earnings due to addiction to gambling? Will it help to pay out enough money to the police forces that will have to be expanded because of the bringing of casino gambling into Canada? All the studies that have been done in the United States have indicated that crime escalates significantly in the area where casinos are established. That is not going to change in Canada. There is no reason to assume that it would, and therefore, we are going to have all these increased costs. Yes, we are going to receive money. I believe that it is going to be balanced, but the one thing that is not going to be balanced is the devaluation of the human spirit. As a government, it should be our priority constantly to build up the community that we are governing, and if there is a proposal which is going to devalue in any sense either the spirit of the individual person or the job that that person does, it seems to me that the Government should not be pursuing such a course. I believe that casino gambling is morally wrong and reprehensible and therefore it should not be intro-

duced and we should not be going further on this issue.

JS: How would you answer critics who say that you want to impose an old-fashioned morality?

DD: Well, first of all, after I stop laughing at them, I would have to say: Is it old-fashioned morality to know that such a system is based up on greed? Is greed a good thing or a bad thing in society? I don't think one has to be old-fashioned to see greed as something which is pernicious and of doubtful value to the human spirit and to human beings. I worked for 10 years as a priest among the urban poor and low income people and I saw how lotteries and other kinds of gamb-



MPP Dennis Drainville: Placing moral courage above political opportunism.

ling helped to sap what little money people have. It makes it more difficult for them to be able to support their families and to spend the money on the things they need. What we are actually doing is setting up a system of greed which means taking money from people who don't have the money to give. It does not seem to me to have anything to do with whether you're old-fashioned or whether you are avant-garde. What it has to do with is plain common sense. You don't want to devalue your society, you want to build it up. Why is the Government doing this?

JS: What is the feeling among other members of the NDP caucus towards this proposal, and are you receiving any support?

DD: Well, there is unease, I

think, among a number of caucus people, as there always is when we begin to change the direction in which we are going as a party. Naturally, we cannot say that we are exactly on the cutting edge of being a social democratic Party in Ontario. If we look around and see the kinds of things that we have been doing and saying, it seems to me that we have a long way to go to maintain the principles and the philosophy that I believe was very important for us all through the 1930's, 1940's, 1950's and 1960's. I think our Party is changing and I think that this is just one more indication of the changes that are taking place.

JS: You touched on criminal intervention into the casinos. Wouldn't government control check that?

DD: Government control could check some of that. We do not know how this casino is going to be set up yet. There has been no definitive indication of whether the Government is going to run the whole thing themselves or whether they are going to do it with partners from the business sector. So, I think it's premature to put forth a point of view that indicates that the Government has chosen one way. Even if the Government chooses to control the actual casino, it is not going to be able to control all the spinoff businesses which are going to be drawn like a magnet to the immediate area around the casino. It just doesn't work that way. All studies have shown that

casinos are a magnet for crime of every kind. If the Government has total control, that will control to a certain extent the amount of crime which is there. But will it stop crime from being drawn towards the casino? The answer to that is "No", because it has not been able to do so anywhere else, and there is no reason to believe that it would be so in Canada.

JS: What else besides casino gambling would you like to see in order to raise the necessary funds?

DD: Let's be very, very direct on this issue. Hidden within that question is the greatest red herring of this whole discussion, and that is: Well, look Drainville: if you are going to be against casino gambling, where are we going to get

money from? We have to have money to run this Government. And therefore, if you are not going to go in the direction of casino gambling, you have got to come up with a whole system of taxation which is going to bring us the monies we need. The presupposition of such a point is that: it is alright to go to wherever you can to get money. Government needs money. So, government should do what it has to do to get money. And, if that means going into casino gambling, so be it. I think that that kind of thinking is immoral, is unacceptable, and does not show any vestige of leadership on the part of the Government. It seems to me that the issue at stake here—how a government raises funds—is as important as the funds that it raises. If a government is raising funds in a way that is immoral, in a sense they are helping devalue the society they are supposed to be leading and helping. And, in this particular case, it would be my contention that casino gambling devalues the quality of life of our people of Ontario. Why would we hope that people would lose their money? Why would we hope that people would end up poor? Why would we hope that

there would be more crime in our society? I cannot understand the rationale that is being put forward here. As to offering other ideas, as to taxation, there is no way out of the mess that we are in at this point in time. We are going to have to struggle through this mess attempting to ensure that the taxes that we levy are fair taxes, that people know what the taxes are, that they are being levied fairly according to people's ability to pay, and that those taxes will be levied according to what our needs are as a government. If that means in-



J.S. Woodsworth, founder of the CCF, valued human dignity above greed.

creasing taxes, then it means we have to do that. I would rather see an increase in taxes than see us put in something like casino gambling which will be another way of taxing people, but will have more detrimental effects accruing to it other than that you are taking five more dollars out of a person's pocket.

JS: Finally, is there anything else that you want to say on the subject that we haven't covered?

DD: Only that I am disappointed with the direction our Government is going on this and a number of other issues. Sunday shopping would be one issue that would be the same kind of thing. We have always fought for a common pause day and the Government has sold out on that. We always believed that we would try to change the system when we got into power in terms of parliamentary reform and we are doing nothing of any significance in trying to change the way in which government operates and parliament operates. I think we have some very real challenges as a government and as a party. I hope we finally turn our attention to these important things.

Left intervenes at Alberta NDP convention

By Peter Matilainen
Alberta NDP Left Caucus

At this winter's convention, following a tradition in the NDP, the Left Caucus was called to evaluate proposed convention resolutions. For instance, we decided to oppose what was a Party constitutional amendment that would have seen a direct vote for Party Leader. It was felt this would favour high profile and well-financed candidates and open the process to external intervention by single-issue interest groups and the mass media. The amendment failed to pass at convention.

We also discussed an emergency resolution on the Canadian Constitution. The resolution said "it was a mistake for our Party leaders to line up alongside the Tories and Liberals" and that we lost an opportunity "to unite Canadian working people around a socialist constitution." It concluded by calling for an NDP majority government that could carry this out.

While there was consensus in Caucus against the NDP's decision to back the Accord, some were concerned that raising the issue now would polarize the Party over something that had already passed. However, in the end, most agreed that, despite problems of wording,

the resolution could not be ignored and, since there was no other forum in our Party to raise our concerns, we decided to organize to speak in favour of it. The resolution brought out perhaps the liveliest debate of the weekend. While it was defeated, with about 70 percent voting against, Left Caucus members I spoke to felt satisfied that the issue had been raised and a message had been sent.

On Saturday evening, two guest speakers from the Ontario labour movement spoke at a Left Caucus forum about Bob Rae's government.

Barry Weisleder, an Executive Board member of Ontario Public Service Employees Union, Region 5, spoke about some positive actions that had been carried out: Bill 40 (which corrected some of the worst abuses in the labour legislation); Rae's rejection of the police mobilizations against the civilian review board; and improvements in the Crown Employees Labour Relations Act which covers government workers.

However, he also believed the Ontario NDP government is preparing for its own defeat by demoralizing its base of support. "For many of us in the Ontario NDP, this government represents a trail

of broken promises", Weisleder said. "No public auto insurance, no Sunday shopping ban, no minimum corporate tax yet, no welfare reform, contracting out of government services." The response of labour and social movements, he concluded, has to be mass action against cuts and privatization to stop any further rollbacks.

Elizabeth Byce, an executive member of the Toronto Canadian Union of Postal Workers local, also spoke. Byce questioned the Ontario Party's commitment to labour. She reported how the NDP Attorney General had an opportunity to drop charges against three Toronto CUPW activists involved in last September's rotating strikes but failed to do so. Their jailing, she said, was a clear message to union militants.

Those who attended Caucus sessions agreed that we needed to meet between Conventions. Members in Edmonton agreed to put out a call for a conference in the new year. New Democrats interested in being part of the Caucus should write to:

The Alberta Left Caucus, c/o
P. Matilainen, 11517-95A Street,
Edmonton, AB T5G 1P6.

New Democrat off the

By Gord Doctorow
Oriole Riding

An unsigned article entitled "Lessons from the referendum" in the December 1992 issue of the ONDP's official publication *The Ontario New Democrat* pretends to expound an analysis of the results of the constitutional referendum

held in late October. Instead of a serious analysis, the article attempts to justify the loss of a major opportunity the NDP had to put forward its own vision of a socialist Canada in the constitutional debate.

Firstly, the article does not even deal with the central fact that the Charlottetown Accord was designed

to hi-jack the previously scheduled referendum that the Quebec Legislature had agreed to hold by October 26, 1992. It blocked the people of Quebec from finally deciding for themselves whether or not they wished to support sovereignty. This critical omission reflects the ongoing blindness of the ONDP leadership to the right of the Quebec people for self-determination in practice and directly accounts for the NDP's lack of credibility in Quebec. By turning a blind eye to the issue of sovereignty in that Province, the NDP has permitted the status quo parties to exploit the situation in Quebec to their electoral favour.

The article speculates that "in many respects" the NDP "may have come out ahead as a result" of the referendum. According to the authors, the NDP forged ahead at the expense of the Liberals who were badly split over the accord. Premier Bob Rae is described as "one of the real heroes" of the campaign coming "across as a principled and strong leader." Though expressing disappointment with the results, Rae is quoted as describing the referendum experience as "cathartic," allowing people "a chance to work out some of their anger".

These superficial and delusory observations attempt to mask the failure of the NDP leadership to reject the Charlottetown constitutional accord—the political complement of the Free Trade Agreement and NAFTA. The reality is that the "No" vote was an anti-establishment, anti-status quo, anti-Mulroney vote which had strong elements of feminism in its essential thrust. As the referendum campaign heated up, the "No" side emerged as a movement waiting for a progressive voice to give it clarity, to provide a vision of an alternate constitutional process that could overturn the crass manipulation of the "Yes" campaign. That leadership was provided, bravely though inadequately, by the National Action Committee on the Status of Women and a few dissident labour leaders. Had the NDP ridden the tide against Mulroney's political agenda, had the NDP boldly opposed his efforts to decentralize the Ottawa government to meet the corporate agenda, had we aggressively campaigned against his constitutional scheme to weaken social programs and deny the people of Quebec the right to determine their own future, had

Alliance backs NDP on use of force laws

By Harry Kopyto
St. Andrew-St. Patrick

When the Ontario New Democratic Party proposed that police officers who draw their guns in public be required to file Use of Force reports last year, the Metropolitan Toronto Police launched a massive campaign of insubordination against the legislation. The campaign had two different aspects to it. Firstly, the 4,500 member police force refused to wear their police caps containing their identification badges. The significance of police removing their ID badges was never mentioned in the media. In addition, they refused to enforce a variety of motor vehicle offenses during a campaign against the legislation lasting several weeks.

As a result of initiatives taken by activists from the NDP and the labour movement, representatives from the women's movement and ethnic communities, civil libertarians and religious groups gathered together to form Ontarians for Proper Policing (OPP). There was widespread concern that the anonymity that the police gained by removing their badge numbers rendered them unidentifiable and therefore unaccountable to the public. The refusal to enforce provincial motor vehicle legislation resulted in the police effectively assuming a legislative function. Those tendencies were considered by many members of various communities to reflect dangerous totalitarian tendencies.

Ontarians for Proper Policing moved out aggressively to defend the government's Use of Force reports legislation and to resist efforts by Metro Police to legalize hollow-tipped bullets and obtain semi-automatic weapons to replace their standard issue guns. Encompassing broader forces than the Black community, which had previ-

ously borne the brunt of campaigns for police accountability, OPP organized a highly successful press conference that focused broad opposition against the Toronto police force's campaign, which was subsequently joined in and supported by the Ontario Provincial Police.

On November 28, 1992, members of OPP, working with the ONDP Left Caucus, were successful in getting the Provincial Council meeting of the NDP to vote in favour of participating in an OPP demonstration organized at the Metro Toronto Police Force headquarters. Close to 100 NDP Provincial Council delegates marched down College Street to join an equal number of community activists in a militant demonstration of support for the Government. Speakers from the Law Union of Ontario, Ontario Coalition for Police Reform, the disarmament movement, student leaders, Black community leaders, the NDP and civil liberties groups addressed the enthusiastic crowd of over 200 persons made up of trade unionists, NDP members, minority group members and community activists in the well-publicized protest.

This action, and subsequent activity that Ontarians for Proper Policing is planning, show the possibilities of forming a coalition between party and community activists in defence of the NDP's progressive legislation. They show the willingness of the membership of the NDP to be mobilized in defence of the party and the need for further actions of this sort to support the government from assault from the right. For further information, contact:

Ontarians for Proper Policing
by calling Rosalyn Hazelle at
(416) 796-1231.

mark on referendum

the NDP pursued Audrey McLaughlin's appeal for a constituent assembly, then we would truly have had an "heroic and democratic leadership" that we could have been proud of. Then we could have won support from the majority of Canadians for the NDP's constitutional vision of Canada. Then the NDP could have emerged as the real alternative to the discredited Tory government.

The opposite happened. Thanks to Bob Rae and the other NDP premiers, they were seen to back a discredited Tory political leader in the hopes of extracting concessions on issues involving Natives and the Senate. But the very process of horse-trading that they were engaging in had lost its legitimacy in the eyes of the people of Canada who themselves felt excluded from

the process. The resulting rage could have been mobilized behind the NDP's own democratically-determined program as decided by the last Federal NDP Convention. That convention advocated a constituent assembly to resolve Canada's constitutional crisis and explicitly recognized the right of the people of Quebec to freely determine for themselves whether or not they wish to be part of this country.

Instead, the NDP was reduced to irrelevancy, eclipsed by Mulroney, who, despite his promise to be non-partisan, found the time in the midst of the campaign, to attend the signing of NAFTA in Texas. NDP leaders expressed shock that Mulroney violated his promise to be non-partisan by promoting free trade during the referendum cam-

paign but the price of such naivete was high. In fact, the newly created National Party of Mel Hurtig was born in the vacuum created by the abdication of the NDP from its obligation to promote its own constitutional program. Several hundred persons who should be active card-carrying New Democrats have now been attracted to Hurtig's National Party with its populist promises of grassroots democracy.

Like other discredited politicians, Bob Rae warned that a "No" vote would set Canada back "for decades", attacked the National Action Committee on the Status of Women as a "special interest group", and sold illusions about a social charter which was unenforceable. The result was the lowest gallop poll rating for the NDP in years following the October 26, 1992 vote which has inched up only marginally since that time. By refusing to consider a vision of Canada without Quebec as a province, Rae effectively sealed the NDP's fate as a cross-Canada Party. He provided free rein to the Liberals and Tories to exploit differences with Quebec to their benefit and to shut out the NDP from the possibility of forming a federal government.

It is important that, from time to time, New Democrats consider the past failures of their leadership and their party with a view to avoiding committing similar errors in the future. However, this process must involve an honest evaluation in which superficial rationalizations and clever phrases do not deny a bitter reality. Unfortunately, the article published in the December *New Democrat* did nothing to help this process.



Marion Boyd -- a new start?

By Zane Boyd
High Park-Swansea

Former Attorney General Howard Hampton, who was relegated to the position of Minister of Natural Resources in a cosmetic Cabinet reorganization announced by the ONDP government February 3, did not exactly win accolades for his performance in Bob Rae's government. His term had been characterized by obsequious towing of the legal establishment's line. He had resisted efforts to increase public control of the legal profession, allowing the elitist Law Society of Upper Canada to continue to reward its friends and punish its enemies within the legal

profession. He supervised cutbacks to the Ontario Legal Aid Plan. He gave in to pressures from crown attorneys to isolate and drive out independent-minded officials in his department. He prosecuted and demanded jail terms for three postal workers who were found guilty of contempt for resisting an order restricting picketing in a flagrant attack on workers' rights that caused an uproar in the labour movement. He "championed" the Charter rights of Toronto police officers responsible for the December, 1992 shooting of Tony Vega by upholding their "right to remain silent" in violation of their statutory duty to answer questions regarding the killing. He has even

delayed making the justice system more accessible by increasing the upper limit for suing in the Small Claims Court.

As if this was not enough, Hampton also targeted Ontario NDP Left Caucus Steering Committee member and former lawyer Harry Kopyto. The Attorney-General's Department is intervening in an upcoming appeal by Kopyto of his disbarment on trumped-up overbilling charges in 1989. Kopyto is challenging Law Society discipline rules that permit the same body to act as prosecutor, witness and judge. The Law Society has since changed its discredited procedure but the Department is still

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Discussion is needed

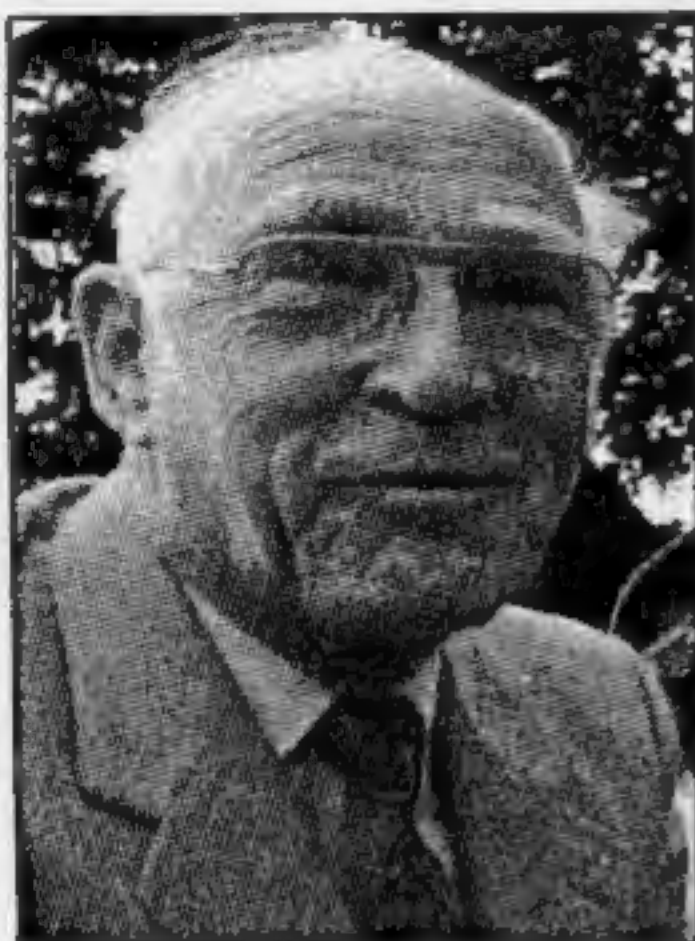
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quences of the ONDP leadership's drift to the right over the past two years.

This statement was made to and on behalf of almost 180,000 workers in Canada. Its significance lies in the fact that the NDP owes its existence and its social base to the labour movement. Hargrove's words must be met with action to enable working people to reclaim the ideology and program of their political voice—the NDP. This is why this Report must be discussed throughout the Party, within the ridings and at Provincial Council on an urgent basis. It poses the need for a broad and all-encompassing discussion regarding the future direction of the NDP government in the last half of its term of office.

Echoes of Hargrove's theme have been expressed by former Waffle leader Mel Watkins, who recently stated publicly that "Provinces can't themselves abrogate the FTA but what they can do is test its limits. I don't

mean just for the sake of testing. I mean by bringing in necessary policies. Then if anyone says, 'You can't do that because of FTA,' we should say, 'let's check that out.'" Watkins also called on NDPers "to strengthen institutions that can counter capital. Chief among these are unions..." (St. Andrew-St. Patrick Newsletter, October/November, 1992.)



Former MPP Mel Swart received wide support among NDP members this winter for criticizing Rae's dumping of public auto insurance.

The ONDP Left Caucus has played a pioneering role, along with others, in promoting a political critique of Rae's rejection of public auto insurance that Buzz Hargrove has now accepted. For example, Hargrove stated that "some of the workers in the [auto insurance] industry could have been placed in the public insurance corporation...Others could have entered training programs for jobs...created by [the] government". These

words echo the Left Caucus's own proposal more than one year ago that "Workers threatened with redundancy by the takeover could have been absorbed into public positions. Special training pro-

grams...could have eased any adverse impact from the government's action." (ONDP Left Caucus circular, *Discussion Needed!* October, 1991). Moreover, Hargrove's call also echoes former MPP Mel Swart's 1991 campaign against the restrictions in the Free Trade Agreement which U.S. insurance corporations had argued blocked the government's commitment to public auto insurance in Ontario. His renewed critique this January of the ONDP leadership's continuous backtracking in which he said he could not nominate Bob Rae as ONDP leader again as he had originally done, met widespread approval within the Party membership. The convergence of these positions is now clear, and offers a unique opportunity for combined efforts.

By involving the membership and rank-and-file activists in the Party in such a discussion, an alliance can finally be established between the labour base of the party, sections of which have drawn a balance sheet and decided to move to the left, and the party membership, which can be revitalized around an active campaign to defend and extend the Party's program. In particular, cooperation between militants in the CAW and socialists in the NDP including the Left Caucus in promoting the discussion initiated by Hargrove can lay the foundation for such a broad alliance.

Hargrove calls for independent labour mobilization to stop government from bending to business pressures.

The following letter was sent by Buzz Hargrove, CAW President, to the ONDP Caucus last December 17. Copies were sent to the other NDP premiers, Audrey MacLaughlin, the ONDP Executive and the Executives of the OFL and the CLC.

Dear Caucus Members:

As you likely noticed in the press, I recently made some fairly strong and critical remarks about the government in Ontario. The remarks were part of a broader report [reprinted on the opposite page - Ed.] made to the 400 elected delegates to the CAW Council who meet three times a year as a virtual "parliament" of our union. My comments reflected the frustration of our members and activists with the direction of the government - a frustration I obviously share. It would, I am convinced, be a mistake to explain the discontent as simply reflecting unfair accusations of overly high expectations. Although such things may be part of the story, something deeper is involved.

First, people are desperate for someone to be clearly fighting on their behalf. This includes specific policies but it is also about language and how the NDP positions itself relative to the very real constraints that are out there. When the government warns people to

"get real" and adopts the arguments and pressures that we regularly hear from business, it not surprisingly leaves people with the feeling that there's not much to do about anything, and that politics barely matters. If, instead, the government were to identify the constraints, directly challenge them, aggressively stretch them, test to see how far it can in fact go, people learn something quite different. They learn who the enemy really is, and they learn that, while there may be limits to what can be done, the NDP is on their side fighting, rather than selling, those limits. It's the difference between laying the groundwork for demoralization and laying the groundwork for mobilization.

The fact that the conservative agenda is widely seen to have failed so miserably reinforces the above point. They, not us, should be on the defensive. And we, not them, won the election with a mandate for change.

Second, and related to the

Hargrove urges in CAW Report: Stop bowing to business, stand up for NDP program!

With the recent loss of the NDP government in the Yukon Territories we now have NDP governments in Ontario, Saskatchewan and B.C. My comments here will concentrate on the Ontario NDP as the first of these three governments to come to power. But the issues I'm raising are, I believe, relevant to each of the provincial NDP governments.

In spite of some very important decisions in support of all working people, and equally important decisions dealing with equality issues for targeted groups, we hear more and more criticism of NDP governments amongst working people in all provinces.

The problem is there appears to be no plan during this mandate to challenge the power of capital. They are not using the tools that government provides to point out the complete failure of right-wing government policies over the past decade - policies that have seen the corporate agenda implemented without exception: deregulation; privatization; a shift in taxation away from corporations

and on to individuals, and relative reduction in the taxes paid by the rich; the expansion of regressive sales taxes like the GST; elimination of family allowance



INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

(Canada's first social program); continuing attacks on our national medicare program; cutbacks in U.I.; cutbacks in government services to people; and of course the FTA and now NAFTA.

These policies were supposed to bring greater prosperity for all. Millions of dollars of corporate advertising are spent attacking the NDP government for labour reform, employment equity, pay equity and every other piece of legislation they introduce to help people. Millions of dollars of taxpayers' money is spent by the federal Tories to convince the population that the worldwide recession is to blame for all our problems (even though Canada's unemployment is the *highest* amongst the major developed countries), and that free trade is good for people even while they lose their jobs through closure and layoffs as multinationals restructure under this expanded freedom for capital.

The unemployed are told "you should be proud to lose your benefits" and make a contribution to this corporate agenda. The elderly and poor are told that paying more for drugs under Bill C-91 is good for them.

Why is the NDP government not aggressively exposing the failure of
CAW - page 8

above, there is a sense out there that we really face an emergency in human terms, yet the NDP is increasingly reacting to that emergency with the all-too-familiar emphasis on cutbacks and constraints. A measure of the seriousness of the times is that even the most optimistic economists talk about an upturn that still includes hundred of foodbanks, mass unemployment, permanent insecurity. But if the threats are so dramatic, why isn't the response equally dramatic? If old policies don't work, why aren't we trying new ones (or old ones introduced in the Great Depression - that did work and should be revived)?

"They, not us, should be on the defensive. And we, not them, won the election with a mandate for a change."

In war times, the profits of the rich, the growing disparities that undermine the notion of equal citizenship, the failure of the banks to channel our savings into

productive investment, wouldn't be tolerated. Why are we tolerating them in these emergency times?

Why isn't the government acting decisively on infrastructure - infrastructure that it knows we desperately need - and inviting all the provinces and municipalities to join

it in an economic conference to force Ottawa to acknowledge the crisis that won't go away? What are the plans for providing useful activity for unemployed young people facing hopelessness and vulnerable to racist propaganda? Why, with no alternative jobs around, aren't we putting mechanisms in place to limit plant closures so we can keep skills and productive equipment at least employed or so we can invest in modifying these facilities so our communities aren't robbed of productive capacities? Why isn't the

Ontario government saying "Yes, we do spend a fortune on health and education and transportation. And we are now going to systematically ensure that this spending power is invested in jobs in Canada"? Why not introduce a mandatory two-week training right for every worker in this province - as an investment in the future and as a vehicle for sharing existing work more equitably (workers receiving training must be replaced; this doesn't mean more overall work, but it does mean jobs for more people and the more productive use of the overall workforce)? And so on...

Third, the labour movement is struggling with the question of how to deal with a sympathetic government. And one point is becoming clear: backing down on our demands, deferring to friendly politicians, is doing the labour movement no good and it is doing the government no good. We ourselves have to aggressively push the government and mobilize independently because a) the
Hargrove - page 8



In pensive but fruitless thought: "The Bob Rae government has not put in place a credible alternative around which to mobilize Party and labour activists."

CAW Report says that NDP must challenge the power of capital

from page 7

this agenda?

When the NDP government of Ontario took power, they immediately faced the start of a devastating recession, as well as the accelerated restructuring of capital under free trade. This has combined to bring our province to the edge of a depression. Tax revenue has declined for two consecutive years—the first time this has occurred since the depression.

As one response, the Bob Rae government backed away from the party's longstanding commitment to public auto insurance. The reasons given were the enormous cost associated with moving from several private insurance companies to one public corporation, the inevitable challenge from the U.S.-based insurance companies and the U.S. government under the FTA; and the move to a more efficient, less



PUBLIC AUTO INSURANCE

costly government plan would have led to major job losses in the industry. The NDP government decided that, in this economy, the downside was too great and backed away from its commitment.

This caused great frustration among long time party activists and members. I defended the government's position at the time, because I agreed the money could be better spent and the job loss was unnecessary.

In retrospect, I was wrong. The government was wrong. This issue was a missed opportunity to challenge the power of capital while at the same time, challenging the U.S. free trade agreement and exposing, to the country, what this agreement meant to the sovereignty of provincial governments, as well as the federal government.

Some of the workers in the industry could have been placed in the public insurance corporation with better wages and working conditions represented by public sector unions. Others could have entered training programs for jobs being created by government with the confidence to move ahead with an industrial strategy for Ontario. That initial defeat of the government gave the corporate world the confidence that they could defeat or at least control the economic agenda of the government while they continued to attack the government on equality issues.

The Rae government responded by trying to diffuse the criticism of the corporate world by more and more talking the language of the Business Council on National Issues and the language of the right-wing government in Ottawa. Its programs, policies and public statements were full of rhetoric on

Hargrove to NDP caucus: Let's open debate

from page 7

government does not always know what's best; and - b) our mobilization gives the government some space for action - without it, the government increasingly bends to the pressures of business.

The point of my statement to the Council was to strengthen, not weaken the Party. Many former supporters are drifting out of politics or into the arms of the Reform Party. Many others will continue to vote for the Party at election time, but without the zeal which - for a Party that doesn't have business support - is our very lifeblood.

The Council endorsed my statement, but what was more significant was the level of discussion and healthy debate that occurred. Yes there was frustration expressed, but people also raised warnings about the alternatives. Yes people were critical, but they weren't looking for excuses to give up on the Party - they were looking for changes that would revive their

enthusiasm. Yes some people were concerned about a public laundering of differences, but people also understood that public debate - including public campaigns to push this government in certain directions - is both part of the democratic politics we believe in and the only way to actually change things.

In short, our delegates certainly

understood the spirit in which I raised my very serious concerns and the resultant debate at the Council was - as many observed - undoubtedly healthy. I hope the parliamentary caucus will respond to the statement not as an antagonistic

"attack", but as a forceful attempt to engage the government in a debate about its fundamental direction and strategies.

Sincerely,
Basil "Buzz" Hargrove

"People are desperate for someone to be clearly fighting on their behalf."

competitiveness, partnership, restraint, cutbacks and how you give incentives to business as the key to economic renewal.

But the corporate world continued and even intensified the attack on its so-called partners, completely ignoring the efforts of the Bob Rae government to develop a relationship.

Along with this refusal to challenge capital and to expose the failure of the corporate agenda, the Bob Rae government has not put in place a credible alternative around which to mobilize party and labour activists.

As we move into the second half of the government's mandate, NDP activists and supporters need to see that our first NDP government in Ontario is prepared to challenge the status quo and fight to defend the interests of ordinary people.

The government could start with a commitment to stop the cutbacks of public services; to eliminate the increases in tuition for university students and to reinstate student grants and interest free loans to previous levels; to support the

mobilization, at the local level, against the cutbacks of transfer payments by the federal government; to working with municipal politicians and local activists to pressure the federal government to start a massive capital expenditure program to rebuild the infrastructure of the province; to using the purchasing power of the Ontario government in health care, education and transportation to develop a strategy to produce and buy these products in Canada; by mobilizing together with the NDP government in B.C. and Saskatchewan for mutual support through government procurement to create jobs, and to pressure Ottawa to change direction; and by using an Ontario Development bond that could raise money from the people of Ontario to rebuild the economy.

This bond could be advertised as a war bond. A war against unemployment and poverty in our communities. A war to eliminate the need for food banks, and a war against homelessness in this rich province. Working people would be asked to invest in their future, with a guaranteed safe return on their investment which may be slightly lower than higher risk

investments, but people could see their money at work across the province, creating jobs for family, friends and neighbours.

And this government in particular should be opening up dialogue with the labour movement, allowing greater input in every sector, including public sector unions, and taking advantage of a lot of good people with helpful ideas and energy for turning the corner after a decade of a corporate right-wing government's mismanagement of our economy.

I do not want my comments to be misunderstood. I certainly appreciate some of the very important changes which the Ontario NDP government has introduced. I'm aware of what has happened in some other, non-NDP jurisdictions during this period. I know—as do other working people—that all our

demands cannot be met. And I think I understand the significant constraints that face NDP governments because of the state of the economy and the power of business. But I also know that the frustrations of our membership signal a serious

problem that we cannot pass over, and that problem re-revolves around our relationship to the NDP once it is in power.

For those of us in Ontario, the experience of a social democratic government is something new, and we are still struggling to figure out how to deal with this. But one point is becoming increasingly clear: we cannot simply leave politics to the government we elected. Governments will stray unless they are held accountable.

If we take the idea of social democracy seriously, then we have a responsibility to criticize this government, challenge it, make demands on it, mobilize for it, and—yes—sometimes mobilize against its direction. This is the only way to make it a better and more representative government.

We have to forcefully say to our friends in government that there is an alternative. We must step up our pressures on them to move from crisis management of the economy, to start challenging the power of capital, and to begin building support for the long-term struggle to make this a more humane province with economic and social justice as the priority.



Left Caucus Notes

The Ontario NDP *Left Caucus* participated in the ONDP convention held last June in Hamilton, Ontario. In addition to distributing over 2,000 copies of an expanded 12-page issue of the *Left Caucus Newsletter*, a slate of five candidates ran for various Provincial Executive positions. Lennox Farrell was elected as a member-at-large to the executive. Other candidates included Harry Kopyto, who received 28% of the vote for vice-president, Ann Emmett, Kevin Robertson and Lois Bédard, who ran for member-at-large positions in support of a socialist program that called for a leadership accountable to the party, for carrying out convention policy resolutions, and for mobilizing to defend labour and extending social gains.

A successful end-of-the-summer barbecue was held by the Ontario NDP *Left Caucus* in Toronto on August 30th last year. Close to 40 members and supporters of the *Left Caucus* feted on socialist hot dogs and hamburgers prepared by the *Left Caucus's* official chef, Joe Steinbok, of Orillia riding. The festivities continued late into the night following a brief discussion on the then up-coming referendum on the Charlottetown Accord. Those present voted overwhelmingly to oppose the accord.

The Ontario NDP *Left Caucus* participated actively in the "No" campaign during the constitutional referendum. Approximately 1,500 leaflets were distributed containing a 2,500 word analysis of the Charlottetown accord entitled "How Can We Vote Yes?" at the Toronto Labour Day parade. During the September Provincial Council meeting of the ONDP, the Ontario *Left Caucus* organized a panel discussion featuring speakers from the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty and the *Left Caucus* which attracted an audience of 25 delegates including a member of parliament. A subsequent meeting in October featured Richard Fidler, a political commentator and translator, from Hull, Quebec and the editor of *Canada, Adieu?* (Oolichan Books, 1991) who made a trenchant historical and constitutional case for opposing the Charlottetown Accord.

Casino socialism, anyone?

By Harry Kopyto
St. Andrew/ St. Patrick

The NDP is too hung up on ideology. But we have a chance to shed our doctrinal baggage and advance an industrial strategy at the same time. How, you ask? Why, the answer is simple: establish the legal casino in Windsor and pepper all of Ontario with similar establishments before our first term ends! And let's do it openly and with enthusiasm — the benefits will be amazing! Our overly-modest leaders sought to adopt this proposal by order-in-council, fearful that NDP members would be swept away with ecstatic partisan fervour by a parliamentary debate. But let us give credit where credit is due.

Gambling will create jobs for the large numbers of unemployed croupiers, floorwalkers and debt enforcers. Spin-off industries such as pickpocketing, prostitution, loan-sharking and the gun trade will show that we reward initiative as much as the establishment parties. It will also give the tourist trade a boost. Many Americans from Detroit, known for having an enterprising, motivated subculture, will be attracted to our Windsor casino, improving Canada-U.S. relations, increasing capital investment from money-laundering operations and making more jobs for police, lawyers and morticians.

Casinos will be a major distraction for the jobless in Windsor, who may be having trouble adjusting to a life of leisure following plant closures. An afternoon before a slot machine will provide recreational diversion at minimal government

expense. Are workers going to spend their paycheques on gambling? No problem. Food banks are well-established in Windsor. Neglected children will be cared for by local Children's Aid Societies. Wives battered by husbands taking out the frustration of losing will find the finest crisis shelters and medical care in the Windsor area. A source of real pride!



Jobless need diversion that casinos will offer.

Worried that casinos might add to alcoholism and drug dealing? But imagine the taxes we will rake in! We could create more hospitals and jails to deal with these problems, while boosting our image as a caring society! What a country!

As we hit the home stretch of our term of office, let's "get real," to quote our fearless leader. Do we want to follow a program of demo-

cratic planning which failed in the well-known democratic, socialist republics of Albania, Romania and Yugoslavia? Do we want to expropriate profitable runaway plants, and violate private property? Do we want our government to operate retail outlets selling surplus food at cost, undermining the profits of food conglomerates whose potential support for the NDP will be jeopardized? Can we trust workers to run their shops and factories when we just saw so many of them irresponsibly rejecting the Charlottetown Accord? Do we wish to succumb to extreme measures such as imposing more than the current two percent surtax on the \$1.6 billion dollars profits that Canada's banks made in Ontario last year? Can anyone doubt that income generated by casinos will relieve the overtaxed wealthy so that they will be encouraged to continue their successful job creation activities?

But hey, hold on! What about our promise to be responsible? Big business is listening. If we don't keep our promises, what will happen to our credibility on Bay Street? Is now the time to gamble on democratic socialist planning and alienate our broad support among business interests? Or will we finally cash in on the marvels of the free enterprise system whose superiority is a sure bet, as anyone looking at the sterling performances of the U.S. and British economies will undoubtedly attest?

Let's get with it, fellow New Democrats. Get rid of those ideological blinkers. Step right up to the table, place your bets on casino socialism. After all, what have you got to lose? ...But your change?

Time for a shake-up in A-G's office?

from page 5
defending these laws.

On top of that, last June, the Law Society, along with police directed by Hampton's department and Legal Aid officials, executed a search warrant at Kopyto's home as well as at the office of his associate, Angie Codina, who has herself been harassed over several years by the Law Society for her association with him.

More than 17 large cartons of clients' files were seized. A dozen police officers and investigators executed the warrants simultaneously on the basis of incomplete and distorted information in a massive "fishing expedition".

Kopyto and Codina had written Hampton asking him to stop ongoing harassment by the Law Society. However, he backed down from an earlier promise made by him to investigate the matter without adequate explanation.

Now former Social Services Minister Marion Boyd has taken over Hampton's old job and has assumed responsibility for deciding whether such discredited policies and decisions should be upheld. Will she reverse Hampton's rubber-stamping of the decisions made by the conservative bureaucrats in the Department?

The election of an NDP government has opened the possibility for restructuring the institutions of government to favour fairness, undermine the authority of the elites and ensure impartiality in

the justice system. Unfortunately, the Attorney General's department has proven to be a slavish adherent to the status quo, upholding the laws of those who are privileged against those who advocate social change. New Democrats are encouraged to write Marion Boyd at 720 Bay Street, 8th floor, Toronto, Ontario, M5G 2K1 (copies to us, please) to reconsider the actions of her predecessor, including the harassment of Kopyto and Codina as well as others. If the new Attorney-General shows as much loyalty to the rights of the poor, the labour movement and working people as her Conservative and Liberal predecessors showed to their big business friends, we would be a major step closer to having real justice for all. Will Marion Boyd do the job?

Program needed to replace foodbanks

By John Clarke
Provincial Coordinator,
Ontario Coalition
Against Poverty

One of the clearest indications of Ontario's mounting poverty crisis is the sad situation of hundreds of thousands of the poor and unemployed lining up at foodbanks. 155,000 a month must do this in Toronto alone. They are a major growth industry and their existence is a blot on society. Even if foodbank operators conduct themselves with compassion and play the role of advocates for those they assist, one basic fact remains the same - charity does more for the giver than those forced to line up at the receiving end. The price paid for an inadequate nutritional supplement is one of personal humiliation. No concept of social justice can allow for a situation where foodbanks remain open.

In 1989, the NDP Caucus at Queen's Park gave full support to a three-pronged provincial March Against Poverty that had as its slogan that "The First Business of Ontario is the Elimination of Hunger, Homelessness and Poverty". While campaigning for office, Bob Rae undertook to end the need for foodbanks in this Province. Today, those fine sentiments and promises ring hollow and the poor and unemployed are increasingly embittered.

Let me make clear that no one doubts that the main enemy is the Tories in Ottawa and no one overlooks the massive transfer payment cuts that Ottawa has inflicted on the provinces. The defeat of the Federal Government would be the best anti-poverty measure that could be taken. What we in the Anti-Poverty Movement can't forgive the Rae Government for, however, is not that they are having difficulty living up to their promises but that they have walked away from them altogether. A policy of "international competitiveness" and deficit-bashing has replaced any commitment to a social justice agenda. Coming in the wake of a string of social cuts, we have just seen pitifully inadequate welfare payments for 1.2 million Ontarians frozen and the cheques for 800,000 Family Benefits recipients held back until after Christmas. In the same week, as if to rub our noses in inequity, the Province's judges got a whopping 6.7% pay hike!

There is an alternative. We have to have an NDP Government that rejects the policies of neoconservatism and places defending the



social infrastructure ahead of pleasing Bay Street. I understand that the Ontario Left Caucus proposed a resolution at the last ONDP convention calling for the government to purchase excess food from farmers to be sold at cost through government-operated food distribution centres. Such a measure, which would likely eliminate the need for food banks, requires a vision of producing to meet the needs of people rather than profit and a willingness to stand up to agribusiness and corporate power. An eroded system of medicare and a tattered social safety net is a far worse legacy to leave to our children than a deficit.

If ten years of Reaganomics has shown anything it's that the war on government spending is, in reality, a war on the poor and working people that creates social dislocation and, ironically, an even bigger deficit.

To speak the harsh truth, Bob Rae is buying into the logic that demands the poor be beaten up in the name of fiscal restraint. The poor have no option but to fight back and we appeal to the rank and file NDP to take our side and demand of this Government that it change course and take up a struggle for social justice in deeds as well as in the rhetoric of the conference hall.

Mailbag

All-Black schools are not the solution

Dear Editor:

Lennox Farrell's argument for a predominantly Black family of schools ("The Textbook and the Gun", Left Caucus Newsletter, Summer 1992), raised some questions in my mind:

On what, for example, does the will to learn really depend these days? Can teachers who are also role models "guarantee" that?

And, could it be that shared learning is an indispensable feature of the sort of education that today's young people need if they are to meet the demands of their time?

The essential problem, according to Lennox, is the loss of "value of self". But, as Gloria Steinem, (Revolution from Within), points out, studies on the subject generally conclude that schools cause self-esteem to plunge for almost anyone. Now, would it not be better to tackle this problem together, with a

sense of common purpose rather than in relative isolation?

And how, I wonder, is the "value of self" to be realized out of the context of the whole?

Surely segregation will not lead to harmony. Surely there are alternatives to a splintered system, that could address our needs, improve the quality of education, and do more to bring us together.

Some suggestions:

- pre-school education that will enable children of all backgrounds to share enriching experiences that will nurture self-confidence, stimulate the desire to learn, and generate a strong sense of community;

- the careful selection of able teachers, reflecting the multicultural fabric of society, but chosen for their ability and commitment;

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Mailbag cont'd

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- improved and ongoing teacher training that will emphasize teaching students, not subjects;
- additional opportunities for those with special needs;
- a block of time in the weekly schedule for particular needs and interests (after the French model?);
- special assistance and encouragement of Blacks, Chinese and others to enter the teaching profession;
- totally revamped curricula and methodology, developed by a diverse group of people in education;
- if a pilot project like the one proposed by Lennox goes forward, let there be another family of schools attempting the same goals but with a mixed student body and staff.

I wish I could believe that a prescient few could solve the problems that Lennox is dealing with here—that something as easy as separate schools and role models could redress the wrongs he deplores and advance his dream. But I can't. It seems to me that we are all "inescapably" in it together, and that we must learn and work for change together. Otherwise, to use a familiar medical metaphor, the operation may turn out to be a brilliant success, but the patient, alas, may well come out of it dead.

As members of the same political party, shouldn't we be discussing issues like this among ourselves on a regular basis?

Ann Emmett
Toronto

OUR SURVIVAL DEPENDS ON YOU!

The *Ontario Left Caucus* owes more than \$1,500 to its printer, not counting the expenses involved in the publication of the current issue. Each issue costs us in the neighbourhood of \$1,000, sometimes more if the issue is expanded. Several hundred copies of the *Newsletter* are mailed to NDP members across the Province. Our ambitious efforts to circulate and distribute the paper, however, will not be able to continue and are imperiled by our growing deficit. We require your urgent contributions in a generous amount to ensure our ongoing publication program. We have recently been heartened by a \$100 donation from a new subscriber and several other contributions in lesser amounts which indicate to us that there are readers who appreciate the importance of the *Left Caucus Newsletter* and are willing to commit themselves financially in order to make sure that it continues to publish.

How important is the *Newsletter*? Judge for yourself. We intervened in the public auto insurance debate with an analytical circular that was widely distributed to ridings in Ontario and contained proposals which were subsequently echoed in the December, 1992 CAW President's Report criticizing the NDP leadership for its drift to the right. We distributed specific proposals for an accountability resolution which was the focus of a broad discussion at two Provincial Council meetings. We intervened in the debate on the abrogation of Sunday closing legislation with a statement that called upon the party to remember its socialist roots. We printed 3,000 copies of a 12 page newsletter which was widely distributed and well received at the 1992 ONDP Convention. We presented a socialist critique of the Charlottetown Accord in a four page statement mailed to

more than 800 Provincial Council delegates and alternates in addition to distributing thousands of copies at other NDP and labour functions. On every critical issue that the NDP government faced during its term of office so far, the *Left Caucus Newsletter* was there, offering a programmatic alternative to the Party leadership's adaptation to pressure from business interests, providing members with detailed analyses and insights into the issues confronting the party.

While we have received a number of significant contributions in the recent past, our finances remain shaky at best. We need much more. \$5,000.00 is necessary in order to meet the escalating postage and publication costs that have to be paid to ensure that issues like the present one reach New Democrats during the current year in all corners of the Province and to retire our debt. We have now reached a turning point. Without these funds, we will have to scale back our publication program seriously.

In our view, it is especially important for the *Left Caucus Newsletter* to continue to be published at this critical juncture. For the first time, the possibilities of an alliance between increasingly militant trade unionists and the socialist wing of the Party membership is being posed by CAW President Buzz Hargrove's critique of the NDP leadership's drift to the right. The *Left Caucus* can play a critical role in assisting the birth of such an alliance, sorely needed in order to revitalize the Party, reestablish the primacy of the Party's membership and program, promote the accountability of the leadership and ensure that the party's program is carried out. We need your contribution.

Will you help?

Left Caucus Newsletter

ONDP LEFT CAUCUS
BOX 39, 552 CHURCH STREET
TORONTO, ONTARIO M4Y 2E3

Please add my address to the Left Caucus mailing list. I have enclosed a contribution to help finance and circulate the Newsletter for which I will receive the next several issues. (Please send at least \$10 as this is a minimal amount necessary to meet our expenses. We really require greater amounts to allow us to increase our periodicity and meet inflationary expenses.)

Name (Please print) _____ Phone () _____

Street _____ Apt. _____

City/Town _____ Province _____ Postal code _____

SPECIAL EDITION

LEFT CAUCUS NEWSLETTER

Autumn 1993

Volume 6 No. 2

What happened to the NDP?

Left on the defensive

For many years, the left in the NDP was put on the defensive by accusations that it was overly ideological. At convention, riding and Provincial Council meetings, we were made to feel like spluttering dogmatists, even intimidated from saying what we knew was right by a sense that we were impractical, unrealistic, harmful to the Party, almost like intruders who were spoiling a good time.

When the NDP was elected in September, 1990, this fear of being marginalized by our emphasis on the fundamental principles of socialism—democratic economic planning, production for use instead of profit, public ownership of the productive wealth of our country—was magnified one thousand fold. After all, didn't the NDP get elected under the leadership of pragmatist Bob Rae? Didn't this show that the options before the NDP were wide and various, and that leftist ideologues had to let the leadership stay in the driver's seat, for a while at least withholding judge-

ment? The NDP's electoral success muted the left, though deep in our hearts, we knew that history would absolve us, to borrow a phrase from the 1960's.

Unfortunately, we didn't have to wait for long. No matter how much we try to get away from it, the fact remains that the biggest mistake that the CCF-NDP made was to dump the Regina Manifesto. Virtually every

single political error of significance that the Government has made resulted from its abandonment of a vision of an alternate society that would put people before profit and democratic economic planning before the chaos of an unregulated market. Its break from the traditions of the Regina Manifesto, from the perspectives of J.S. Woodsworth and Agnes

McPhail, of William Irvine and Tommy Douglas, left the Ontario Party without a rudder, pressured by the powers that be to do their bidding at the expense of the public interest.

Though public service workers are paying the biggest price right now for this breach of our traditions, the cost of abandoning our roots has also eroded the NDP's credibility among every other social sector that has ever identified with our Party. Despite all this, the message the left must bring to the remaining ranks of the NDP, and also to those who have walked away from the Party in disgust, is really not different from what we have had to say in the past: only socialism can steer the NDP back on course.

Is it a question of leadership?

Some on the left who focus primarily on the leadership issue fail to see that it is only a small part of the total picture. The problem with the NDP leadership is not that it is incompetent or weak or that it was always prepared to sell the NDP out. The crisis of the NDP's leadership is rooted in its ideology and not in its personal composition.

Look what happened when we took office. The international economic forces that are behind the erosion of Ontario's manufacturing industry left the NDP Government two choices—move cautiously towards socialism or attempt to manage a capitalist welfare state economy in a condition of pending crisis.

Not only Bob Rae, but the entire NDP cabinet, failed to promote a vision of extending the public domain into the heights of the economy through a democratic plan under public control. Not a single Member of



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Provincial Parliament spoke in favour of keeping runaway U.S. plants operating, where viable, under public ownership when there was a local market to be met. No one spoke for government initiatives to establish industries to produce products suited to Canadian consumers. No one argued in favour of planning our economy to meet our own internal market, producing pollution free, fuel-efficient cars suited to our environment, permafrost structures in the far north, snowmobiles, insulation and similar products designed for Canadian needs.

Drifting to the right

These options were not considered viable by the NDP Government or its leadership. The reasons go back to ideology, not the nefarious of any person or group. For years, the NDP leadership had been speaking less and less of public ownership and democratic planning. Even though it was catapulted into power by a rise in expectations that the NDP would break with the corruption that mired the provincial Liberal Party and take bold measures to implement its Agenda for People Program of reforms, the leadership of our Party had already become wed to the idea that private industry was the engine of economic growth. Accepting this premise, the Government's essential role was seen as preserving a high rate

of profit for business interests. This would then generate the jobs, spinoff industries and economic activity needed to revitalize the economy. In time, social programs would multiply and everyone would benefit. But first and foremost, the interests of private business had to be protected in order to ensure such a recovery.

Hence, the NDP Government set course on a path which it has yet to abandon. Algoma, DeHavilland, Consumers' Gas, Caterpillar—in instance after instance, private industry had its way. Oh yes, there were concessions, compromises, a willingness to sacrifice and all that good stuff that Bob Rae talks about. But it was all within the framework of the status quo—a limited version of a welfare state. There was only one little problem. This model of social organization was undergoing a severe crisis everywhere in the world because of increased competition and shrinking markets.

In fact parties that were elected to power like the NDP elsewhere in the world have not only proven unable to reform the worst features of capitalism but have been forced by the severity of the economic crisis to attack the workers themselves as in France and New Zealand. In other words, there was no way welfare state capitalism could be made to work in Ontario in the early 1990's. Ironically, the Rae leadership was advanc-

ing Utopian ideas while socialists in the Party were offering workable solutions.

But this course, chosen by the cabinet, had its own logic, which pushed the NDP further and further to the right. Not only was a welfare state impossible to maintain but the pressures of the crisis of international capitalism were forcing cutbacks, layoffs and privatizations on all governments trying to control the economic crisis and public debt. The abandonment of public auto insurance, the sanctification of Sunday work, the legalization of casinos and finally, the Social Contract Act were part of this inexorable pattern. Once the premise that capitalism could be made to work was accepted, no political principle could be allowed to stand in the way of clearing the deck for private capital.

No mobilization

This perspective reflects, as well, a perception that a government in power can peacefully reshape the institutions of state power to serve whatever interests it chooses without involving the population in implementing and defending its program. The government bureaucracy, the upper echelons of the public administration, the police, courts, boards and profes-

sional elites that dominate Ontario, were seen as neutral bodies that a competent government could use to achieve its goals, whatever they might be. The NDP Government sought to use these instruments in a more humane and caring way than previous administrations. Instead of revitalizing all these institutions with the new forces that helped elect the NDP, from top to bottom, too often there

were only cosmetic changes at the most visible levels.

Left untouched were the hierarchies that dominate government institutions, with the insolence, contempt and disdain that they show for working people completely intact. The base of the Party was never

mobilized to defend its programme the way that big business mobilized its forces and resources against the Government. Many NDP policies were watered down in implementation by a hostile or reluctant bureaucracy making a mockery of our original electoral programme.

And now, post mid-term, we are awash in a sea of hostility, having destroyed our trade union base, lost our credibility, encouraged the most conservative elements at other levels of government and we are still awaiting the accolades from the business interests, who still think we have not gone far enough.

The alternative of socialism

Against this pragmatism of the NDP Government's leadership, which accepted the social relations of capitalism as capable of meeting human need, an alternate vision could have been posed. There is even now, at this late date, a choice, a path that leads us back to the future, which unites us with our roots and synthesizes a perspective that could inspire the membership and win back the electorate.

The chaos in our economy, vast wealth amidst grinding poverty, a "jobless recovery", where savings from technological innovations benefit the wealthy and



THE NDP GIVETH, AND THE NDP TAKETH AWAY...



make workers redundant are not inevitable. It does not make sense to have farmers driven off the land when hundreds of thousands can't afford food, when profitable plants like Caterpillar in Brampton and G.M. in St. Catharines located near market centres are dismantled to be reconstructed in the southern United States or Mexico while highly-skilled productive Canadian employees are thrown into the streets. It does not make sense to have plants lie idle when Toronto has 20,000 persons wandering the streets without shelter. It does not make sense to target public workers and social services, education and health, while the banks announce hundreds of millions of dollars of profits.

Just as the systematic undermining of the industrial base of Ontario is not an accident but a part of a planned restructuring designed to consolidate operations where profits can be made most easily and where markets are closest, so too we need a plan to take control of the economy in the interest of production for our own markets. This can only be realized on the most thorough-going democratic basis. This means community control over our neighbourhoods and our local institutions. It means workers' control and self-management at the workplace, coordinated through elected representatives at the local, regional and federal levels of every industry and sector. And it means ongoing citizens' control over elected government representatives. We

need a strategic vision of a planned economy in which each sector is integrated with each other and through which the working people of Ontario will control their economic fate.

Can capitalism be reformed?

Our current economic crisis shows that capitalism is incapable of balancing supply and demand, capacity and need, human ingenuity and social priority on its own, any more than Stalinism could. The haphazard destruction of our economy by "free" market forces has resulted in massive unemployment, wasted resources, deepening divisions on the basis of sex, race and class, and devastation to our environment.

The market has proven to be a barrier not only to fulfilling human needs, but ultimately to human existence. Hundreds of thousands of jobless Canadians are the result of discord in the "free labour market," ruled by the brutally "efficient" law of supply and demand. And at what cost in human suffering! As a recent report released by the Canadian Mental Health Association points out, "As the jobless rate increases, so does

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Remember Socialism?

It has become clear to thousands of activists in the trade union and social movements as well as in the NDP in Ontario that political power without political clarity will end in disaster. We have seen the NDP, elected with an unprecedented vote of confidence from the workers of Ontario, succumb to crass political opportunism because of the ambiguity in its political programme and analysis.

Many of us have spent the last year fighting to take the Party back to its roots and socialist traditions by attempting to organize a full discussion within the NDP. We then organized a series of forums this spring and summer designed to initiate a broad discussion within the Party. This discussion has now been rebuffed.

We wish to unite with other activists, inside and outside the NDP, to exchange our experiences with them. We wish to develop a better understanding of the programmatic demands and visions needed to transform society and empower the dispossessed and exploited constituencies that suffer most in the current recession. We ask those active in the labour movement, women's movement, Black movement, student movement, municipal politics, tenants' organizations, anti-poverty groups, social solidarity movements, academics, anti-war groups, human rights groups and others to help us organize a conference where we can have this urgently needed dialogue.

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Help make this conference a reality. If you are an activist in the labour, social movements or NDP and still believe in socialism, give us a call. We need your help to plan and organize this labour/socialist/activist conference.

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Left Caucus Newsletter

ONDP LEFT CAUCUS
BOX 39, 552 CHURCH STREET
TORONTO, ONTARIO M4Y 2E3

Please add my address to the Left Caucus mailing list. I have enclosed a contribution to help finance and circulate the Newsletter for which I will receive the next several issues. (Please send at least \$10 as this is a minimal amount necessary to meet our expenses. We really require greater amounts to allow to increase our periodicity and meet inflationary expenses.)

Name (Please print) _____ Phone () _____

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Continued from page 3

the rate of depression, anxiety, self-deprecation, fatalism, anger, spouse abuse, suicide, homicide, sexual assaults, property crimes, divorce and alcoholism".

The crisis that the current situation in the NDP poses for the labour movement is not one that can be solved by a mere change of leadership, especially in the absence of an alternative to Rae. The labour leadership itself was instrumental in placing Bob Rae into office both as leader of the NDP as well as into government, and someone else that we could support to replace him would not necessarily be more loyal to working people than Rae has been. The problem is that our labour leaders failed to challenge his ideology and even defended Rae and his autocratic leadership style from criticism by the left. They ensured that resolutions critical of the early retreats of the NDP Government on a wide variety of issues were not adopted at conventions. As recently as at the last provincial convention, the labour leadership supported resolutions opening up the Party to corporate donations and blocked a resolution that would have made the leadership directly accountable to the Party.

The road ahead

The weak forces on the left within the Party cannot take on its administration—the extensive party apparatus—on their own. Within the Party there exists a highly defensive attitude that if we do not hang together, we will hang apart, which the leadership draws on to rally the troops whenever needed. In the final analysis, just as the present leadership of the NDP was shaped by the labour movement which elected it to power, this same labour movement, with its vast resources, organic links to the NDP and influence, both potential and real, at every level of the Party, can help reshape its direction. To date, it has spoken of doing it but has not done so.

The NDP remains the

only political party that labour can use to defend its interests. Militant economic actions by the trade union movement and coalitions with social organizations cannot substitute for a political party that poses the need for electing labour to power.

While labour has not abandoned the NDP for any other political party or in favour of a new party, it now



faces the possibility of being divided between more conservative forces who continue to support the Government; albeit, somewhat critically, and those who have walked away from the provincial Party in disgust, deciding to sit out the next period of political activity. Whichever tendency within the labour leadership predominates, both alternatives fail to address the urgent need to revitalize the Party from the bottom up, to imbue it with the determination of the rank and file of the labour movement and to focus its programme on socialist measures as we near the end of our term of office.

To do so would require a mobilization around clear class demands tied to a vision of a socialist democracy. We need to promote a democratically determined economic plan with socially determined priorities, where workers, communities and government can jointly manage the

economy. We need a vision of a social system in which reckless profiteering is replaced by production for use and surplus wealth generated by increased productivity would be used to benefit society through a reduced work week with the same takehome pay rather than bloating the profits of U.S. corporations. Even at the provincial level, the Ontario Government could use

Why should I vote NDP?

Many workers who have seen the Ontario NDP Government turn on them with the Social Contract Act may be having second thoughts about how to vote federally. They shouldn't.

The NDP is still the only alternative. The Liberal and Conservative Parties remain the Parties of big business serving the banks and insurance companies in implementing the corporate agenda and selling Canada out. Though the Liberal Party is playing coy with NAFTA, the fact remains that a vast acceleration of continental integration with the U.S. took place under Liberal governments in the 1970's. Similarly, abstaining would be a copout.

If you want to make a statement about lacking confidence in the drift of the NDP to the right, there are ways of doing it without paving the way for the big business parties to take power.

The problems that the NDP is undergoing reflect the crisis of trying to implement a programme of reform during a capitalist economic recession. It cannot be done without a clear socialist direction and a willingness to fight the business interests. But even in the absence of a leadership with such a clear socialist commitment, the NDP retains its character as a working class party that represents independent labour political action. Like it or not, only the NDP remains the party of the labour movement. It remains totally independent of big business. It retains its organic links to the trade union movement which provide it funds and election workers. The NDP still makes a difference. A big difference. Vote with your class. Vote NDP.

the Province of Ontario Savings Office to generate the capital needed to protect us from the threats of international bankers to raise interest rates and boycott investments, thereby eliminating the worst fears posed by the deficit. It is thus that we can reassert a clarity of vision and commitment to principle and struggle that have won the NDP, and before it, the CCF, respect over several decades among working people.

This alternative is not academic. When the NDP was elected it took office, not power. Socialism remains the burning need of the moment. Either the labour movement ensures that the NDP moves forward with a socialist programme, or we watch the Party that we helped create and elect consume itself by destroying the roots and traditions and visions that gave it life to begin with. The choices are stark. The course is clear. The time to act is now.

LEFT CAUCUS NEWSLETTER

Winter 1993

VOL. 4 No. 3

Labour's political future

Millions of workers voted last month for a federal Liberal Government to stop the slash and burn policies and the mass unemployment created by the Tories. But why was the NDP not a

the cross-Canada labour movement. Labour has always had a decisive organizational presence inside the NDP through its role in providing financial backing and election workers. If the Party did not belong to the



Union leaders failed to challenge the Ontario government's drift to the right within the NDP. Will they now rebuild the Party as a pro-labour and socialist instrument?

factor in this equation? In fact, why was the NDP shunted aside by so many workers as irrelevant to their aspirations?

It took more than 60 years of hard work in the CCF and NDP to reach this stage. The organized labour movement always looked to the NDP as its political voice in Parliament. Many workers were gradually won over as the election of NDP governments in the provinces attests. The New Democratic Party was founded with the support and the backing of

labour movement as such, at least it was our hope, our friend, our ally, our defender and our voice in the political arena.

Still, while the NDP was labour's home, labour was not master in its own political house. The leadership of the Party fell to persons outside the labour movement. Though we sat on the Party's Councils, we never had control. Though persons from the labour movement held key positions, our roles were symbolic. In the

Labour - page 2

Who we are

The Left Caucus of the NDP is supported by trade unionists and social activists who believe that a pro-labour and pro-socialist perspective is indispensable if labour is to have a meaningful political voice. Months before the Social Contract was proposed in the NDP, we campaigned actively to organize a debate within the NDP to bring the views of trade unionists such as CAW President Buzz Hargrove into the Party. Left caucus supporters campaigned in both the public and private sector unions as well as within the NDP against the Social Contract Act and for an emergency policy convention of the Party. The lead article in this issue reflects the views of trade unionists on the Left Caucus Steering Committee.

Labour leaders must share blame

from page 1

Though we attended conventions, we seldom became involved in fashioning the Party's program. Though some of us joined riding associations, we rarely took responsibility as executive members. Though we worked as canvassers during election campaigns, few of us ran for Parliament.

Labour's failure to accept responsibility for the direction of the NDP as a whole had severe consequences. It meant that we allowed the Rae leadership to dilute or jettison our adopted policies. It meant that we gave the NDP leadership support even when it took wrong positions on separate schools, on accountability and against the Party's left wing. It meant that we allowed cabinet members from labour's ranks, like Bob McKenzie and Frances Lankin, to tear up their union cards and lose their identity as advocates of labour. It meant that we papered over our differences on the Social Contract at Gananoque, allowing Rae a free hand to emasculate public unions. Many of us were silent when then Attorney General Howard Hampton jailed CUPW militants like Kolompar for violating a picketing injunction.

There was no systematic effort to take issues back to our locals for discussion. We did not establish bridges to riding activists. Political schools were strictly organizational rather than political in content. We regarded the only place where political discussions took place--in the left of the Party--with a combination of humour and distance. Our role was behind the scenes, as if we wanted the NDP to hide that it was a Party of the labour movement. Some of us even bought the line that control of the NDP by the labour movement would scare away moderate middle-class votes.

As a result, persons outside the traditions of the labour movement, (and sometimes even hostile to

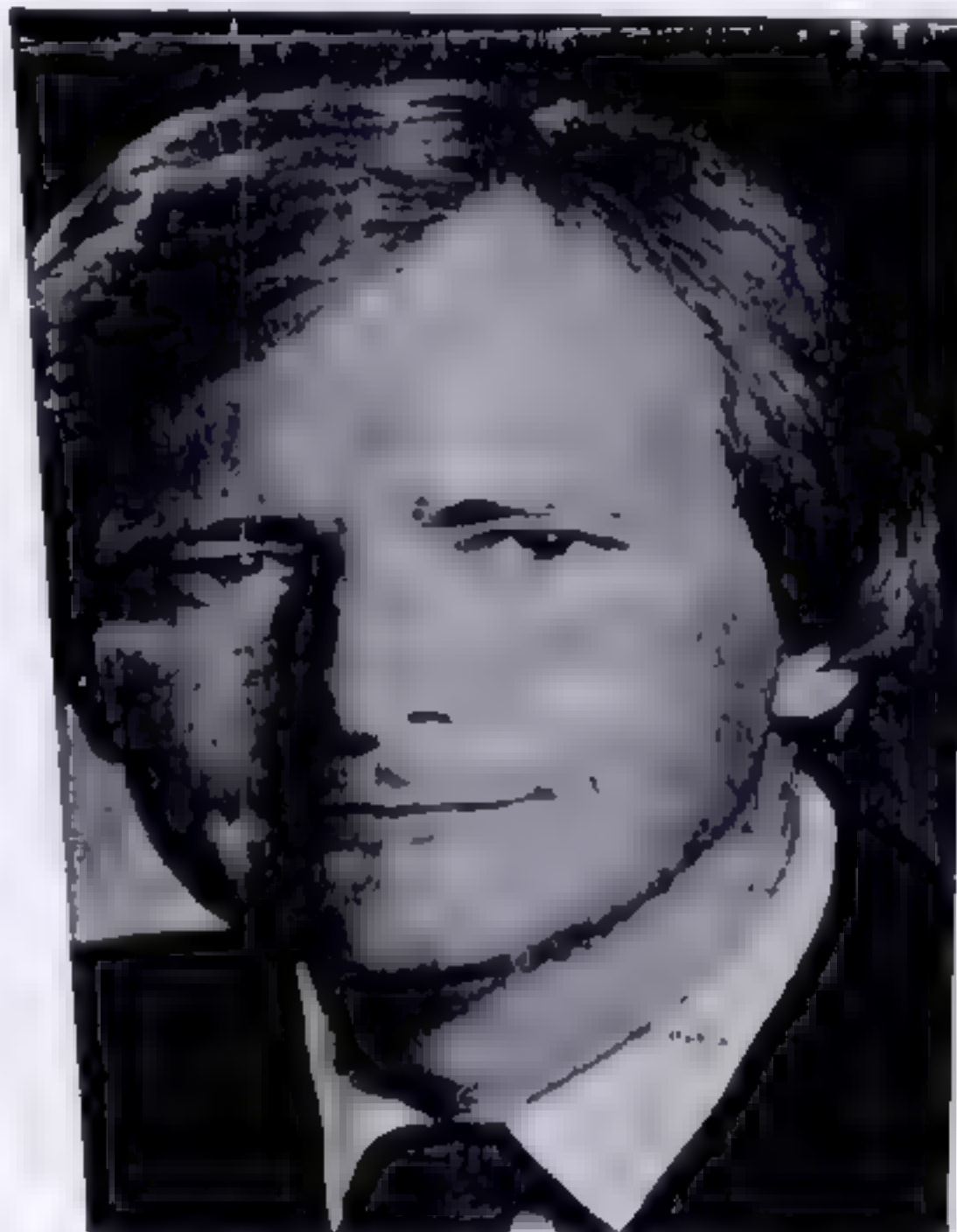
it), ended up leading the Party. These leaders were soon hammered by a systematic attack from business interests, the media and a hostile bureaucracy left over from decades of Conservative/Liberal rule. Though the NDP government resisted pressures from the right during the first budget presentation in 1991, the growing isolation of the leadership, the absence of a mobilization in defence of the government from the base of the Party and the escalation of right-wing attacks soon threw the government leadership, the cabinet and the MPPs way off course. The rest is history.

But the blame for the debacle of the ONDP also rests with those labour leaders who did not get involved in the struggle to return the NDP on course and even defended it from critical confrontations. When the NDP government watered down anti-scab labour legislation in 1991, they merely recorded a muted protest against this retreat. When the NDP government steered the Party in the direction of legalizing Sunday work, even though this measure was a hidden attack on overtime rates, labour pulled its punches letting the NDP leadership have its way. Labour's official leadership even stood by silently as the Agenda for People programme, including public auto insurance, was dumped, costing the Party its credibility not only within the labour movement but with the public. The Ontario Federation of Labour repeatedly worked behind the scenes trying to influence the Rae leadership as if it had to be grateful for the few crumbs the Rae government gave to labour.

The sudden and rapid shift of the Party against public workers took the OFL leadership by surprise. In truth, it was years in the

making. The reticence of the OFL's leaders to tackle issues as they arose and to mobilize the membership in defence of a beleaguered government under right wing assault paved the way towards the Party's demise. Shamefully, the OFL leadership was complicit in the squelching of discussion within the Party, especially in the wake of CAW President Buzz Hargrove's criticism of the Rae leadership last December, the exclusion of left-wingers from Party posts and the parrot-like voting against dissent.

Even during last year's convention of the Ontario NDP, labour's leading power brokers sat on their hands while the Party's constitution was changed to open the door to corporate contributions, and resolutions backing accountability were soundly defeated. And what about the "brave" words at



Steven Langdon — Labour has allies to rebuild the NDP

Gananoque? Ambiguous compromises engineered by the labour leadership let Rae off the hook while dissident Steven Langdon had to take him on virtually alone. Was it really that far to go for the government leaders, encouraged by labour leaders who refused to tackle Rae inside the Party, to decide that the

Social Contract Act was all the economy needed?

Where do we go from here? Is the NDP still an option for the labour movement? Can the Party be redirected to serve the labour movement and to build socialism in Canada? Or should we cut our losses?

Clearly, labour needs a political party to represent working people. In time, the Liberals will implement their own corporate agenda. The only difference between the Liberals and the Tories is that they work different shifts for the same boss, except during an emergency when they work overtime together. Our allies in the women's, social and equity movements, in the churches and communities, cannot take the place of a Party able to contest for political power in Ottawa, where the broad issues that face working people are finally decided in the context of state power. Working people must couple social mobilization with their own genuine alternative to the big business parties whenever the question of who governs society is posed.

Many militants, especially in public sector unions, speak of building a new labour party. They have written off the NDP as a viable instrument for defending working people, especially after the acid test of the Social Contract Act. The NDP in Ontario has lost its credibility among working people almost entirely. Electoral decimation is inevitable in the next provincial election. The thought of resuscitating the NDP as an instrument of labour is often met with derisive laughter or cynical scoffing from militant workers.

But aren't the issues raised by the current crisis within the NDP posed by the task of building a new labour-political party as well? How is such a party to be built? Who should it appeal to? What should be the role of the labour movement within it? What should be the role of the social organizations? How would labour ensure democratic control of

the party at its base? How will such a Party be maintained as a social movement and not just as an electoral force? What measures are needed to ensure the accountability of the leadership to the party's programme? And finally, what programme should the labour movement promote for such a party to provide jobs,



defend social services and wrest ownership and control of our collectively produced wealth from a tiny and powerful financial elite?

The NDP cannot be rebuilt, let alone can a new labour party be founded, as a loyal ally of the labour movement without working people entering the Party in large numbers. It cannot be rebuilt without labour activists assuming co-responsibility for the operation of the riding associations and without the labour movement actively focusing the Party on implementing its programme. It cannot be rebuilt without labour bringing its pride in its class and heritage to this Party, instead of trying to hide behind haughty, silver spoon-fed leaders.

The historic tragedy of the Ontario NDP would not have taken place if our own leaders had not allowed—even collaborated—in the Party being hijacked by persons unaccountable to the Party's base in the first place. For too long, our leaders have assured us that all was well within the NDP, that we should sit quietly in the back seat and leave the driving to others. Enough is enough. No more is it business as usual.

The issue before the la-

bour movement is not whether the NDP can be revived or whether a new labour party is needed. In our view, the traditions and history of the NDP, its existing structures and the presence of members within it such as Mel Swart, Steven Langdon and Mel Watkins show that it can be won over to support a clear pro-labour position.

The real issue is whether Ontario's labour leaders will finally take responsibility for ensuring a political voice of principle for working people in this Province.

We need a leadership willing to mobilize around a sustained campaign for a shorter

work week with the same takehome pay to pass the work around and to distribute the benefits of new technology fairly. We need a principled labour leadership committed to a clear alternate socialist vision of society, advocating a democratically planned economy to wrest control of our economy back from the U.S. dominated transnationals.

In the final analysis, it was the blind faith in the workability of capitalism that impelled the Rae leadership to dump on labour for the system's ills. Once Rae became Premier of "all the people," he lost his roots in the struggle to replace control by the wealthy few with the power of the oppressed and exploited.

After 8 months of rhetoric by the OFL leadership against the Social Contract Act, in favour of unity between unions in the public and private sectors, in opposition to the right wing drift of the ONDP leadership, nothing has changed. The NDP ridings remain moribund. The union movement remains largely split if not paralysed. The Party's bureaucratic apparatus continues to dominate Provincial Council meetings. The left

The political - page 4

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J.S. Woodsworth — Founder of the CCF, and a man and party of principle.

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The political future of labour

from page 3

Party remains bereft of active linkage with the mainstream of the labour movement. Trade unionists remain angry and confused. Everything is said. Nothing is done.

Which way forward for the labour movement? History has shown unexpectedly and without mercy, what happens when labour allows murky liberals to lead its own political party. Political clarity, an activist base, an accountable leadership and a strong sense that we are also a movement are all preconditions for the rebirth of a party that can speak out confidently and boldly for working people.

Such a party can win back those workers who will soon become disillusioned with the Liberals as they reveal themselves to be another

party of big business.

Will the NDP rebuild from the bottom up on the basis of democratic membership control? Will it adopt a vision of a planned economy democratically administered by working people? Will it be as proud of its class base as the big business parties are of theirs? Or will we continue to flounder in the confusion, demoralization and disintegration of the present? Labour holds the key. The choice is ours to make.

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PATH TO LABOUR UNITY

Vol 7, No. 1

LEFT CAUCUS NEWSLETTER

The labour movement is in a state of crisis. Its very survival as a united movement in the face of the relentless onslaught of the bosses is at stake. A deep rift divides the public sector unions from several private sector unions. In addition, some private sector unions that used to be the backbone of NDP campaigns in Ontario have withdrawn from active participation in the Party. The ranks are disoriented. The Ontario Federation of Labour leadership speaks of unity but the reality is much different.

SPECIAL 1994 CONVENTION EDITION

In the opinion of the ONDP Left Caucus, which holds to socialist views and traditions within the Party and the labour movement, the critical task before us is to reunite all pro-labour forces along a clear class solidarity perspective. We need a political party and leadership as loyal to the labour movement as the Liberals and Tories have been to the corporate sector that dominates Canadian society.

When the NDP was unexpectedly catapulted into power in 1990, its leadership sought to use the levers of governmental power to achieve its goals. It abandoned any concept of mobilizing the social base of the NDP: the membership of the NDP, the labour movement or the social movements, in defending or advancing the programme upon which it was elected against the cutbacks by big business and its allies. Eventually this strategy unhinged the Party from the movements that gave it reasons for being and isolated it from its base as it became the target of a vicious campaign backed by anti-labour forces, developers and the corporate controlled media. Without rooting itself in the forces that elected it and mobilizing women, tenants, minorities, working people and the social coalitions, the lifeblood of the Party—it inevitably surrendered to the status quo under the right wing assault.

Yet even the negative experience of the last four years can have their lessons.

Never again can we leave the representation of labour's interests and politics to a corps of professional politicians detached from the daily struggle. Those who lead us in politics as well as in the workplace must always serve the interests of workers and their allies. The union leadership failed to ensure that an active mobilized membership rooted in the ongoing struggles of working people and connected to the social movements was always there to bolster the NDP leadership. Any NDP government will become trapped in the parliamentary games played by establishment politicians if it limits its strategy to parliamentary manoeuvres. Such machinations only hide the reality that a tiny, powerful, wealthy few make all the critical decisions that affect the economic well-being of the workers, farmers and students of Ontario.

Second, we must never allow our political representatives to drift from the principles of solidarity which have inspired the labour movement and won it every single gain of significance from medicare to unemployment insurance. The NDP in government has become a prisoner of the capitalist parliamentary system which has rightfully become the subject of much contempt by the citizens. An NDP government which sends cops after welfare recipients has caved into the pressures of this elite system and violated the principle of "one for all and all for one". What socialist or democratic legitimacy can there be for singling out public servants as victims of the recession through the Social Contract Act while allowing the Royal Bank to rake in one billion dollars worth of profits almost completely untaxed?

Many human rights constituencies feel that the NDP Government has betrayed them. The lesbian, gay and bisexual community is right to complain about a free vote on Bill 28 which involved a matter of principle for all New Democrats—human rights. Similarly, the NDP Government shamelessly capitulated last year to police demands for bigger guns with "more stopping [read killing] power". The Human Rights Commission remains financially starved. Employment equity and pay equity legislation have been passed in piecemeal fashion with many weaknesses and omissions. Even old age pensioners and disabled living in non-profit housing have seen their rents increase from 25% to 30% of their pensions while OHIP coverage has been eliminated entirely for foreign students, thereby deepening inequalities and inequities that we should be eliminating. At the same time, the ONDP government has utterly failed to tax the super-rich and especially the banks and financial institutions which have siphoned off so much through interest charges on public debt. By passing these measures, we not only have dumped our socialist "baggage" but we have allowed Tory and Liberal governments throughout Canada to use Ontario as an example to justify their own severe cutbacks.

With an election in sight, it is tempting to avoid raising issues which involve self-criticism. However, what is the point of taking power if we lose our sense of social solidarity and just end up administering the status quo, or worse still, doing the dirty work for the economic elite? Real unity cannot be achieved by papering over our differences. We need to clear the air. The unity of the labour movement and its political voice can only be reasserted by no longer blurring

our message.

We know the Party is in crisis. Members have quit in droves. Ridings are inactive. Criticism is taboo. Finances have plummeted. Loyalty to the Party leadership has superseded loyalty to the social vision which gave birth to the NDP and the labour movement. Criticism, no matter how slight, is treated as betrayal. Provincial Council meetings have become staged rubber stamps and photo-ops for Premier Bob Rae. Accountability of the Government to the Party has become a cruel joke. Convention resolutions are treated with a studied indifference when not openly ridiculed by government leaders. Even our past has been wiped out by engineered rules to drop our convention policy through the sneaky expedient of "sunset clauses". It is clear that the final result of the NDP leadership's relying on a hostile Government bureaucracy and official structures of power to achieve its goals instead of on the working people of Ontario has been to deepen divisions and undermine solidarity.

The labour leadership bears full and equal responsibility for the tragic degeneration of the NDP. It failed to mobilize the ranks behind the implementation of the NDP's electoral platform. It saw its role as a broker able to exploit connections with the NDP to obtain favourable legislation and did not accept responsibility for the conduct of the Government as a whole. Labour leaders did not advance the need for a legislated shorter work week with the same take-home pay to establish a powerful link between organized labour and the jobless. Nor did our leaders make the link between the untaxed superprofits of the banks and the deficit, between U.S. capital draining Canada's resources and the need for public planning to meet our own internal needs, between the cascading discrepancies in income and the need to raise the minimum wage to increase purchasing power.

Real unity can only be established by action in favour of a programme that can defend working people from the assault that will now follow the NDP's upcoming electoral defeat. We urgently need a strategy to return us to our roots and to rebuild a political movement that can be trusted by welfare recipients, women, gays, tenants, students, the old and the poor, by all those whom society seeks to marginalize and exploit. We want to win labour to power. We want a Party that is proud of its base, blue collar and white collar. The wealthy elite dominates Ontario by mobilizing its vast wealth and influence to destroy a labour Government and Party. This fundamental setback can only be overcome when we ourselves now show the same determination and tenacity in taking the only logical course open to us: building and mobilizing the solidarity of the large numbers of workers and oppressed. We need more than a legislative agenda but a rallying focus to consolidate popular power against corporate constraints. Though workers are overall worse off now than they were four years earlier, we are far from defeated. We need a leadership that will resist the pressures from the structures of capitalism to conform and that will not vacillate on our Party's fundamental positions. We need a leadership that will not hesitate to mobilize popular support.

At this juncture, the issue before Ontario workers is how the labour movement can overcome its divisions to work together to fight the ruthless offensive of corporate power. We can only ensure a positive resolution of this question by rebuilding the NDP as a party inspired by a burning vision of social solidarity truly worth winning power for. Then will our Party be restored as an historic force that can wipe away the chaos of capitalism and give birth to a socialist Ontario and a socialist Canada.



The Party's not over. Help keep socialism alive in the NDP. Contact the ONDP Left Caucus at: Box 47623, 939 Lawrence Avenue East, North York, Ontario, M3C 1P8